





# THE TRUE STRUCTURE AND ŒCONOMY OF THE HORSES FOOT.

BY BRACY CLARK,

THE reader may smile at the singular character of the Treatise we here introduce to his notice, but if he happen to be the fortunate possessor of a horse, we will promise him entertainment and profit from its perusal. The absurd and cruel manner in which that invaluable quadruped is often maimed on one or more feet, by the clumsy and routine mode of shoeing is searchingly analyzed and exposed, and various improvements suggested in that process, from a careful study of the anatomy of the hoof and contiguous parts. As Horses are not endowed with the power of protestation against the injuries done them, they are fortunate in having found so able and ingenious an advocate as Mr. CLARK, and we are confident if they only knew their benefactor, their gratitude to him would be unbounded.

FROM THE EMPIRE 25th, MARCH, 1854

*"This is the only work on Farriery I ever  
could understand."*

SIR EVERHARD HOME *addressing* SIR JOS. BANKS.





acknowledge, that of three professors who have undertaken the task of affording this kind of knowledge, not one is followed at this day by the public. St. Bel, from France, with his plano-concave shoe, is wholly disused; and as to Coleman, enamoured with the absurd doctrine of frog-pressure, all his schemes, his principle being utterly false, is nowhere adopted; and as to the third, Prof. Sewel to wit, no one knows his doctrine, but if one may judge by samples we have seen from his forge, it was of the basest kind, nor did he appear very much to trouble his head about the shoeing;\* but all these gave out their dogmas as invincible truths with unbounded confidence, and received recompense accordingly. Now, the liberty and freedom of the parts of the foot necessary as a first principle in its office, and without which he can never go well or possess his feet uninjured, essential principle as it was, was wholly unknown to these men, and which is now become the foundation principle in all intelligent shoeing, so sadly have the horses been understood. And numbers of these young men so educated, not much employed by the public, took to other pursuits; and not a few, being wholly deserted by the public, I am sorry to say, miserably destroyed themselves; and much of this desertion springing from erroneous principles instilled in their education. But let us hope in the future, if not too much blinded and carried away by unworthy prejudices, that we may expect and hope for better things and more kindly and encouraging results, students remembering that it is to their own injury as well as the injury of those against whom such practices may be entertained.

Neither did they seem to properly understand the great advantages of a wide-bearing surface on the ground, called by them *cover*, as though merely for protection; and especially to be discommended their clumsy, thick, narrow hind shoes, for the same principles pervade both hind and fore feet, though a spread or broad-bearing surface is more demanded and given to the fore feet, as receiving at times a greater share of weight, and being by nature more elastic. These remarks are more directly addressed, however, to the lower order of shoeing smiths.

of the foot, and a speedy rejection of their measures and practices, and leading to their failure and disrepute, and distressing and punishing all the horses, and injuring them most seriously, and though always failing in his patents, although fairly pointed out to him, he persisted in it to the day of his death.

\* As may be seen by a testimony of Henry Hunt, M. P., p. 14, addressed to Charles Clark, inserted among very numerous testimonials of disinterested intelligent persons in favour of the steel tablet, and unilateral expansion shoes, with perfect success and satisfaction, seen at the end of the treatise on the Steel Tablet Expansion Shoe.

---

SUPPLEMENT.—So little do I read their labours in *The Veterinarian*, that I did not know anything had ever been written against the very simple and necessary doctrine of the Elasticity of the Horse's, and, indeed, all other feet, nor till I saw it in a French Translation, where all this nonsense is copied, and this by Professor Bouley. To those who have any doubt of this doctrine of expansion, natural to the foot of the horse, the following experiment may be of use: the late Lord Morton, an excellent horseman, one day being in my yard talking with me on this subject, I told him I would give him a visible demonstration of the truth of the enlargement of the foot under exertion or pressure; I then ordered my own mare to be brought forth from the stable, and I put in the hands of his Lordship a pair of calliper compasses, and desired him with accuracy to take the dimensions of the foot, about the middle region of her hoof, and to fix them by the usually accompanying screw. This done, I then brought the mare to a flat stone I always kept in the paving of the yard for all experiments on shoeing. I now set her foot on this stone, and took up her other fore foot and held it from the ground, thus throwing her whole weight of these fore parts on the above single foot. I then told him to try to pass the foot with his callipers, but he could not; well, I then threw my arms round the neck of the mare, and suspended myself with my whole weight added, when the expansion became such as to be actually visible, and the compasses could in no respect pass the hoof. I never afterwards heard his Lordship show any doubt about the matter. Of what use, indeed, would have been an highly elastic furch, or frog as they call it, if this elasticity had not been the object or purport of it?



# RECOMMENDATION TO FARRIERS & SHOEING-SMITHS

*Throughout the United Kingdom of Great Britain,*

IN RESPECT TO THE

INJURIOUS PRACTICE OF SLICING AND CUTTING AWAY THE HORN FROM THE FROGS OF

## HORSES' FEET.

[London, 3d. Ed. 1837.]

THIS baneful practice is still carried on to a shameful extent, and even increasingly so, we have thought, as it were perversely in opposition to the recommendations and efforts made to suppress it, and sometimes ignorantly, by which the feet of Horses are brought into a state of painful tenderness and unfitness for service, and are thereby prematurely ruined; we are induced therefore, from seeing fully the mischiefs of such proceedings, to draw up this short remonstrance, shewing from the plainest reasoning the fallacy of the grounds usually advanced by the Shoers of Horses for this practice, that they may not, through absolute ignorance, be offending in this respect; and which, it is hoped, will have weight with the candid and well-disposed, and that Masters by informing their Men, especially new comers into the trade and young men of it, these ruinous measures may be avoided.

The following is a clear statement of what those who are the advocates for the practice advance in its defence, and the answers thereto.

The first and most usual plea for cutting the Horn of this part is, "*that it grows as the other parts of the Foot, and would grow all over the Foot if let alone, and become too big for the Foot.*"

*Answer.* A more scrupulous examination of the growth of the Horn of this part would teach them that the Horn of the Frog grows only to a certain thickness, the bounds of which, an allwise Providence has beautifully ordained, and beyond which it can never pass, for when it has reached this natural extent of thickness of its Horn, it then loses its power of coherence, and falls into scurfs or scales and moulders away, leaving the figure of the Frog ever entire, otherwise it is obvious every Horse in a state of nature would constantly (from overgrowth become a cripple; so that this apprehension of its overgrowing the Foot is without the smallest foundation; in fact, the removing it, therefore, in whole slices on this account is obviously unnecessary, and most mischievous, since it renders the remaining Horn thin, and by drying, liable to crack and let in wet. The sole also in the same way we may observe, naturally exfoliates in flakes, in the same manner as the Frog, on arriving at the assigned limits of its thickness, that we need not be at all surprized that the Frog is concurring in this same law; it is therefore most clear, that by removing this natural and very necessary covering of the part, is in fact to deprive the animal of so much useful defence, for no purpose whatever, and the horn thus thinned, is only rendering the part more sensible and tender, which, as it is often brought strongly upon the ground, is then too weak for sustaining the impression of the weight, especially when opposed to rough bodies of the road, and he falls; or being bruised, it causes heat and inflammation, and its health and natural toughness being lost, it dries, hardens, contracts, and splits; and thus fissures are formed, which give lodgment to wet and dirt, and the part becoming undermined, is cankered and destroyed with grievous suffering.

The second plea used for defending this practice is, "*To remove the Rags.*" Now this appears a more plausible pretext for cutting it than the former, but let us examine and see what these Rags are, and how they are made, which will clear up this point. For it is most obvious on inspection, that the healthy natural Frog at the commencement of Shoeing has a smooth exterior surface, free from all rifts; but when this natural exterior coat, which is of a barder nature than the horn within, is once removed, the interior horn being of a more moist and succulent nature, dries, especially if in dry weather, and by drying, cracks; the edges of these cracks or fissures turn back, or are reflected, and become what are then called *Rags*, (though it is also true that certain roughnesses or Rags may arise at

times from natural causes, but by far the most frequent and general way is from this previous cutting), now to remove these pretended Rags, they make a deeper incision than the Rag, and so expose still more interiorly the Horn of the part and so increase the evil by producing more and deeper Rags, and going nearer and nearer to the quick at each successive cutting, the Frog is at last fairly flayed, and robbed of nearly all its Horn, and drying and shrinking, becomes hard, brittle, and painful to the animal, and so thin and tender for contact of hard bodies, as stones, &c. of the road, that breaking up, wet and dirt, as we have before stated, get in and canker and destroy the internal parts, and so is produced a source of misery and danger, in the use of him, of the most grievous kind; as well might people propose to cut away the balls of a dog's foot previous to going to the field to hunt, as thus to denude the Frog of its natural covering before his going to work, or upon a journey.

Some of the Smiths seem to think this organ cannot be cut too much; others that it may be cut in moderation; but after deep research and investigation of this matter, the writer of this is led into the most thorough conviction, that this singular organ wants no cutting at all, and indeed there are now in consequence of his suggestions, several aged horses, whose Frogs were never cut, and they are the handsomest, healthiest, and strongest Furches or Frogs that he has ever seen, and in this case the *Frog Stay* assumes a fine lozenge form with great beauty and strength of its external margin.

The comparison or analogy of the Frog with the balls beneath the dog's foot, or to the pads of the elephant or sponges of the camel, is perfectly just and correct, and the one requires just as much cutting as the other; and further, it is a singular fact, which he has lately observed with a degree of surprise, that if a very deep slice of the horn be taken away from the frog, it never after is perfectly renewed again, so that the mischief is incalculable and most frightful, and destruction indescribable, that has been, and is now continually doing by thus cutting away the Frog of the Horse's foot through sheer ignorance.

Another inducement we have thought for cutting the part is, *the soft consistence of the part*, which being like elastic leather or cheese, is inviting to the knife. There is also a delusive expression much used, which has the same mischievous tendency, viz., the unmeaning phrase of Coachmen and others, who certainly are not acquainted with the economy of the part, and who direct the Smiths, "*to well pare out the foot*;" now the word *well* so delusively employed in this case, is quite as easily used with mischievous as with good measures, and as it is in this case a most gross and unwarrantable assumption, and leads to incalculable evil, so against it all honest practitioners' and those having the welfare of their art or of their Horses in view, should be upon their guard; and these Coachmen should leave the things not belonging to their department to those whose business it is to know and understand them better. Notching the inflexures is also quite as, if not even more injurious, by weakening or destroying the very frame of the hoof.

The excuse of late has been, that the masters of the horses will have it done: yes, truly, if they have been previously persuaded by their own servants, taught by the smiths. Also the young novice in shoeing, with his newly acquired sharp weapon, the fatal drawing knife, will easily commit more havoc in one minute than years can repair, the owner perhaps looking on, and applauding the act that ruins his horse.

The rasping off the Cuticle or rind of the Hoof, is also quite as unnecessary and a most pernicious proceeding, leaving the hoof to a merciless drying and hardening by the air.

*Distributed Gratis to be hung up in Forges, or Sold to such Gentlemen as wish to have them in the Forges they respectively Shoe at, at 6d. each*









Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2016 with funding from  
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b22005638>







